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# Duarte in Offer to Nicaragua

By JAMES LeMOYNE

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SAN SALVADOR, March 4 — President José Napoleón Duarte said today that he was sending a proposal to President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of Nicaragua under which they would agree to open simultaneous negotiations with the armed rebels opposing their Governments.

The offer, which appears to be a re-examination of past suggestions by the Reagan Administration for seeking peace in the region, coincides with the debate in Congress over renewed military aid for Nicaraguan anti-Government guerrillas.

But when pressed in an interview today, Mr. Duarte said his offer had nothing to do with the debate in Congress and refused to comment on whether he supported American aid for the Nicaraguan guerrillas.

Mr. Duarte said that under his proposal he would agree to meet military and political leaders of the Salvadoran leftist guerrilla movement if Mr. Ortega agreed to meet the military and political leaders of the Nicaraguan rebel opposition, including the Honduras-based Nicaraguan Democratic Force and the Costa Rica-based Democratic Revolutionary Alliance led by Edén Pastora Gómez.

## Peace Process Deadlocked

If a meeting between Mr. Duarte and the Salvadoran rebels took place it would be the third encounter between the insurgents and Government officials in a peace process that has been deadlocked for the last year.

Based on Nicaragua's past position, it seemed unlikely that the Managua Government would accept Mr. Duarte's suggestion. President Ortega has repeatedly refused to recognize the legitimacy of the armed rebel forces opposing his Government, much less negotiate with them. He and other senior Nicaraguan officials have charac-

terized the rebels, who are commonly called contras, as a proxy army artificially created by the Central Intelligence Agency to harass Nicaragua.

But Mr. Duarte contended that the wars in El Salvador and Nicaragua were linked and were the main cause of instability in Central America. He said Nicaragua arms and harbors the leftist guerrillas fighting the Salvadoran Government, but now is also forced to face an internal rebel opposition of its own.

That combination of circumstances, Mr. Duarte said, should give the Nicaraguan Government sufficient reason to consider a joint negotiating process to end the wars in both countries. He added that after he and Mr. Ortega saw rebel representatives they would discuss their talks with the Presidents of the three other Central American countries. Later, he said, a Central American parliament could be established to discuss regional issues.

## Sandinista Leaders Denounced

Héctor Oquell, a political official of the Salvadoran rebel Democratic Revolutionary Front, immediately rejected Mr. Duarte's proposal. In a telephone interview from Mexico, he said the Salvadoran rebels "do not depend on Nicaragua."

"What he is doing is following the orders of the United States Administration, which wants the Nicaraguan Government to meet with the contras," Mr. Oquell said.

Despite his offer to negotiate, Mr. Duarte had strong words for Nicaragua's Sandinista leaders. He charged that they considered the Salvadoran rebel Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front to be the "vanguard of the Nicaraguan revolution" and he accused Mr. Ortega of running a totalitarian Government that represses the Roman Catholic Church and the press.